

Additional Questions for the Record

Provided by Robert Stewart

Executive Director, Rural Community Assistance Partnership

The Honorable John Shimkus

- 1. The last time you joined us, you testified about the need for strong training programs for operators, managers, and community leaders.**

A. Would S. 611 help ensure that essential training elements continue or occur?

Yes, it will support those training needs that are crucial for small communities to maintain compliance with Safe Drinking Water Act regulations.

B. With renewing the technical assistance provisions in section 1442 of the Safe Drinking Water Act, can small and rural communities sustain the items this training provides?

By allowing for the renewal of the technical assistance provisions in Section 1442 of the SDWA, rural and small communities will have an increased opportunity to receive training that leads to or maintains compliance with the SDWA. It is crucial that appropriations be made each year specifically to support this authorization.

- 2. You have previously mentioned that training should be delivered electronically in order to reach a larger audience for lower costs.**

A. I do not see anything in S. 611 that would prevent this use. Do you?

No. Funding previously appropriated under the authorization contained in Section 1442 resulted in RCAP being able to offer electronic training (both synchronous and asynchronous) in a variety of formats and these trainings generated considerable interest. RCAP feels that in order to best serve small communities a variety of training avenues must be pursued: one-on-one training, classroom-style trainings, regional trainings, electronic training and the provision of training and education materials offered both as hard copies and accessible in electronic formats online.

B. Would you use the funding provided under S. 611 to partner with information technology companies to expand the effective use of this medium?

RCAP currently already has taken a variety of steps to offer trainings electronically including live and recorded webinars, posting of training and educational materials on our web site, offering access to technical experts on line and the use of training videos available both online and used as part of our in-person trainings. We would not hesitate to use the resources of IT companies should that enable a further expansion of our training activities.

- 3. You have said that "[a]pproximately 96% of all health based violations occur at systems serving a population of less than 10,000 while less than a third of the SRF outlays are directed at these same small systems."**

A. Do spending requirements or conditions placed on SRF funds prevent smaller and rural communities from maximizing the full benefit of these monies?

At times application requirements hinder small communities from submitting materials that lead to their being placed on states Intended Use Plans. Some states support technical assistance efforts that support the ability of small communities to submit responsive and competitive applications. If the community cannot get on the Intended Use Plan then they

have no chance of being funded. There is also a tendency in some states to make a few loans to larger systems as that approach is much less time consuming than making a large number of loans to smaller systems that typically require less capital for their projects. RCAP feels that great priority within the SRFs should be placed on meeting the needs of the smallest communities since as you noted these communities have the highest rates of non-compliance.

B. How would the funding made available by S. 611 address this concern?

As long as EPA in the implementation of the program allows technical assistance providers to provide support to small communities that wish to submit applications to the SRF programs, then the funding allowed by S. 611 would begin to address this concern. Our suggestion would be for EPA to structure their cooperative grant agreements in such a way that more of the funding is allowed for this type of management and financial assistance than is currently the case. At present, the majority of the funding that is based on Section 1442 goes for “technical” assistance which by EPA’s definition would not allow this particular, and most important concern, to be addressed.